DECISION RECORD

The need for another alternative surfaced in late September when it was discovered that a population of the federally threatened Pecos sunflower existed on the allotment, and after the public comment period had expired. This alternative was jointly developed by the permittee and BLM. This Alternative is reflected in the attached EA #NM-060-99-217. Under Alternative D, a Cooperative Management Plan (CMP) will be developed. The current NW Pasture (where the sunflower population is located) will be divided into two pastures. This division provides both for the protection of the sunflower during the critical period and facilitate management objectives.

Decision: It is my decision to authorize the issuance of a 10 year grazing permit and a 10 year grazing lease to Jack Hagelstein, Jr. for Allotment #65037.

The permit on Allotment 465037 will be for 190 Aus for 1140 AUMs at 50 % public land from March I to the end of February. An additional 10 AUs (60 AUMs) for temporary non-renewable use will be authorized under the existing Rangeland Agreement. Any additional mitigation measures identified in the environtnental impact section of the attached environmental assessment have been formulated into stipulations, terms, and conditions. Any comments made to this proposed action were considered and any necessary changes have been incorporated into the environmental assessment.

The following conditions will be included in the permit to be issued:

To provide riparian habitat protection for the Pecos Sunflower the NW Pasture will be deferred from grazing during the period of July I thru September 30 each year. After the pasture division fence is constructed, the pasture where the sunflower population is located will continue to have deferment from grazing July I thru September 30 each year.

If you wish to protest this proposed decision in accordance with 43 CFR 4160.2, you are allowed 15 days to do so in person or in writing to the authorized officer, after the receipt of this decision. In the absence of a protest, this proposed decision will become the final decision of the authorized officer without ffirther notice, in accordance with 43 CFR 4160.3. Please be specific in your points of protest. A period of 30 days following receipt of the final decision, or 30 days after the date the proposed decision becomes final, is provided for filing an appeal and petition for the stay of the decision, for the purpose of a hearing before an Administrative Law Judge (43 CFR 4.470).

The appeal shall be filed with the office of the Field Office Manager, 2909 West Second, Roswell, NM 88201, and must clearly and concisely state your specific points.

Signed by T. R. Kreager — 6/28/01
Assistant Field manager — Date

Environmental Assessment for Grazing Authorization
Allotment #65037
EA# NM-060-99-217

Roswell Field Office
Bureau of Land Management
2909 West 2nd
Roswell, NM 88201

T9S R25E, T9S R26E, T10S R25E, T10S R26E various sections

I. Introduction

When authorizing livestock grazing on public range, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has historically relied on a land use plan and environmental impact statement to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). A recent decision by the Interior Board of Land Appeals, however, affirmed that the BLM must conduct a site-specific NEPA analysis before issuing a permit or lease to authorize livestock grazing. This environmental assessment fulfills the NEPA requirement by providing the necessary site-specific analysis of the effects of issuing a new grazing permit on allotment #65037.

A. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

The purpose of issuing a new grazing permit would be to authorize livestock grazing on public range on this allotment. The permit would specify the types and levels of use authorized, and the terms and conditions of the authorization pursuant to 43 CFR §§4130.3, 4130.3-1, and 4130.3-2.

B. Conformance with Land Use Planning

The Roswell Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (October 1997) has been reviewed to determine if the proposed action conforms with the land use plan's Record of Decision as required by 43 CFR 1610.5-3. The proposed action is consistent with the RMP/EIS.

C. Relationships to Statutes, Regulations, or Other Plans

The proposed action and alternative is consistent with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1700 et seq.); the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 (43 U.S.C. 315 et seq.), as amended; the Clean Water Act (CWA)(33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.), as amended; the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1535 et seq.) as amended; the Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978 (43 U.S.C. 1901 et seq.); Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management and Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands.

II. Proposed Action and Alternatives

A. Proposed Action :
The proposed action is to authorize to Jack Hagelstein Jr. and Patricia Hagelstein a grazing permit on allotment # 65037 for 190 Animal Units (AU's) active use and 10 AU's temporary non-renewable use at 50% federal range. This equates to 1140 Animal Unit Months (AUM's) active use and 60 AUM's temporary non-renewable. Grazing will be authorized from March 1 thru the last day of February of each year. The class of livestock are cattle and horses.

B. No Permit Authorization Alternative:
This alternative would be not to issue a new grazing permit. There would be no livestock grazing authorized on public land. The No Grazing alternative was considered, but not chosen in the Rangeland Reform Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Record of Decision (ROD) (p. 28). The elimination of grazing in the Roswell Field Office Area was considered but eliminated by the Roswell RMP/ROD (pp. ROD-2).

C. Sheep Alternative:
This alternative would be to convert all AUM's to sheep. Since the allotment is not fenced for sheep and the permittee did not apply for sheep use, this alternative will not be analyzed .

D. Implementation of a Cooperative Management Plan:

The need for this alternative surfaced in late September 2000 when it was discovered that a population of the Pecos Sunflower exists on the allotment and after the public comment period had expired.

Under this alternative a Cooperative Management Plan (CMP) would be developed and implemented and authorize Jack Hagelstein Jr. and Patricia Hagelstein a grazing permit on Allotment 65037 for 190 Animal Units (AU's) active use and 10 AU's temporary non-renewable use at 50% federal range. This equates to 1140 Animal Unit Months (AUM's) active use and 60 AUM's temporary non-renewable. Grazing will be authorized from March 1 through the last day of February of each year. The class of livestock are cattle and horses.

The CMP would encompass Holistic Resource Management principles and biological planning concepts. The CMP would allow for complete deferment of grazing in the area of the Pecos Sunflower population during the critical of growth for this plant.

The proposed grazing scheme would consolidate the livestock into a single herd. The grazing period for each would be determined through the biological planning processes. During the growing season it is anticipated that each pasture would have a 90 - 120 day recovery period before it grazed again. During the dormant season, grazing would be concentrated in pastures that support large expanses of alkali sacaton and tobosa grass. Dormant season grazing periods will vary in length (30 - 45 days) by pasture and by utilization levels. Some pastures may not be grazed at all.

III. Affected Environment

A. General Setting

Allotment 65037 is located in Chaves County, about 10 miles east of Roswell. The allotment consists of 6 pastures and 2 traps. This allotment contains 11,874 acres of which 6,228 acres are Federal land.

This allotment is located within the Grassland vegetative community as identified within the Roswell RMP. The distinguishing feature for the grassland community is that grass species typically comprises 75% or more of the potential plant community. Short-grass, mid-grass, and tall-grass species may be found within this community. The community also includes shrub, half-shrub, and forb species. The percentages of grasses, forbs, and shrubs actually found at a particular location will vary with recent weather factors and past resource uses.

The following resources or values are not present or would not be affected: Prime/Unique Farmland, ACEC's, Minority/Low Income Populations, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Hazardous/Solid Wastes,. Floodplains, Native American Religious Concerns. Cultural inventory surveys would continue to be required for federal actions involving surface disturbing activities. The impact of the proposed action and alternatives to minority or low-income populations or communities has been considered and no significant impact is anticipated.

B. Affected Resources

1. Soils: The soils present within this allotment belong to the Hollomex-Reeves-Milner general mapping unit. These soils are deep, well drained, nearly level to undulating soils on terraces. For more information, refer to Soil Survey of Chaves County New Mexico, Northern Part. There is a certain amount of erosion that occurs naturally in this vegetation community. High winds in the spring and high intensity thunderstorms are the primary agents of soil transportation.

2. Vegetation: This allotment is within the grassland vegetative community as identified in the Roswell Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS). Vegetative communities managed by the Roswell Field Office are identified and explained in the RMP/EIS. Appendix 11 of the draft RMP/EIS describes the Desired Plant Community (DPC) concept and identifies the components of each community.

The dominant ecological (range) site on the allotment is Loamy SD-3. Range site descriptions are available for review at the Roswell BLM office or any Natural Resources Conservation Service office.There are 6 vegetative monitoring studies on this allotment. Monitoring information has been collected in 1981, 1985, 1990 and 1995. Analysis of the monitoring data indicates condition is good and range trend is static. There is sufficient forage to meet multiple use requirements and for the number of AUs which have been permitted in the past. The percent bare ground and rock found on the allotment fall within the parameters established by the

RMP/EIS for this vegetative community. Copies of the monitoring data and the analysis of the data is available at the Roswell Field Office.

The following table summarizes monitoring data for the allotment:

Monitoring Data Summary, Allotment Averages							
	Grasses	Forbs	Shrubs	Trees	Litter	Bare Ground	Rocks
Percent Composition of Vegetative Cover	88.62	0.85	9.92	0.53	N/A	N/A	N/A
Percent Ground Cover	20.58		5.40		24.59	49.25	0.13

3. Wildlife: Game species occurring within the area include mule deer, pronghorn antelope, mourning dove and scaled quail. Raptors that utilize the area on a more seasonal basis include the Swainson's, red-tailed, and ferruginous hawks, American kestrel and great-horned owl. Numerous passerine birds utilize the grassland areas due to the variety of grasses, forbs, and shrubs. The most common include the western meadowlark, mockingbird, horned lark, killdeer, loggerhead shrike and vesper sparrow.

The warm prairie environment supports a large number of reptile species compared to higher elevations. The more common reptiles include the short-horned lizard, lesser earless lizard, eastern fence lizard, coachwhip, bullsnake, prairie rattlesnake and western rattlesnake.

A general description of wildlife occupying or potentially utilizing the proposed action area is found in the Affected Environment Section (p. 3-62 to 3-71) of the Draft Roswell RMP/EIS (9/1984).

4. Threatened and Endangered Species (T/E): The Pecos sunflower is a federally listed species that is known to occur on the allotment. The mountain plover is a federal proposed species that has the potential to occur on the allotment. There are no other known threatened or endangered species on this allotment. A list of special status species reviewed for this EA was provided by the USFWS through a Memorandum dated June 8, 2000, Threatened and Endangered Species List for Grazing Environmental Analyses in the Roswell Field Office Area (on file at the RFO). There are no designated critical habitat areas for T/E species within this allotment. The status and presence of these species in the RFO area is discussed in the following section.

Pecos (Puzzle) Sunflower - Helianthus paradoxus

The Pecos sunflower is found along alkaline seeps and cienegas of semi-desert grasslands and the short-grass plains (4,000-7,500 feet elevation). Plant populations are found both in water and immediately adjacent to water sources where the water table is near the surface. This species has spotty distribution in the RFO area and is found in only a few areas outside of the BLNWR. A new population was found in 1994 at Bottomless Lakes State Park, growing on the margins of

Lea Lake and its outflow. Lloyd's Canyon, located on Allotment 65137, was the only known location on public land up to the year 1999. The Pecos sunflower only became evident at this location following a prescribed fire. This September 2000, another small population, located on Allotment 65307, was found on public lands at a spring source within a small draw. The location is about two miles south of Lloyd's Canyon. Both areas are located on the east side of the Pecos River.

Continued surveys along the Pecos River have been conducted by the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Division through riparian studies, and by BLM staff during routine field reconnaissance. The largest and most secure population is still found on BLNWR. No other populations were found on public land on the other allotments during the year 2000 field season.

Mountain Plover - Charadrius montanus

Mountain plovers are mainly a species of the high plains and semi-desert regions of the western United States. They prefer flat, short-grass prairie and tend to avoid taller grasses and hillsides (Graul 1975). Suitable habitat often occurs in intensively grazed areas. This species also occupies prairie dog colonies, particularly in mid- and tall-grass prairie ecosystems. Migrants occasionally occur on dry mudflats and shorelines of dry reservoirs (Andrews and Righter 1992).

Surveys have been conducted in New Mexico for the mountain plover by Lawry Sager in 1995, for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (Sager, 1996). No breeding populations were found south of the 34° North Latitude which generally follows the Chaves/DeBaca County line on the north end of the Roswell Field Office area. However, no birds were reported in either DeBaca or Chaves Countys; only one observation was reported in Lincoln County (near Lon). In addition, mountain plover surveys were conducted in 1998 at BLM selected sites by New Mexico Natural Heritage Program (DeLay & Johnson, 1998). No mountain plovers were observed at the sites.

5. Livestock Management: The allotment is grazed by cattle. There are 6 pastures and 2 traps. The latest grazing permit was for 190 AU's active use plus 10 AU's temporary nonrenewable. The permittee plans to run two herds of cattle on the allotment. A deferred rotation grazing system will be used. Pastures will be grazed 1-3 months depending on available precipitation. Actual livestock numbers on the allotment may be less than the active use depending on vegetative and economic conditions.

6.Visual Resources: The allotment is located within a Class II where it is adjacent to Bitter Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. The rest of the allotment is located within a Class IV Visual Resource Management area. The Class II rating means that any changes in any basic elements (form, line, color, texture) caused by a management activity should not be evident in the landscape. A contrast may be seen but should not attract attention. The Class IV rating means that contrasts may attract attention and be a dominant feature in the landscape in terms of scale. However, the changes should repeat the basic elements of the landscape.

JOHN, NEED TO BEEF UP THIS SKIMPY WRITE-UP FOR WATER QUALITY.

7. Water Quality: An ephemeral spring is located on federal land in Sec. 13. The spring source is fenced. Another small spring is located in Sec. 24 and it is unfenced.

8. Air Quality: Air quality in the region is generally good. The allotment is in a Class II area for the Prevention of Significant Deterioration of air quality as defined in the federal Clean Air Act. Class II areas allow a moderate amount of air quality degradation.

9. Recreation: Since this allotment has no facility based recreational activities, only dispersed recreational opportunities occur on these lands. Recreational activities that occur include hunting, caving, sightseeing, Off Highway Vehicle Use, primitive camping, horseback riding and hiking.

Legal and physical Access to public lands located in this allotment are through state lands and county maintained roads. To protect the scenic quality for Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge, T10S R25E Sections 11 and 14 are designated as “closed” for all OHV use. The remainder of public lands within this allotment are classified as "Limited" to existing roads and trails. The majority of public lands in this allotment can only be accessed by foot (hiking, or walking) and by horseback..

10. Cave/Karst: This allotment is located within a designated area of High Karst and Cave Potential. Although a complete significant cave or karst inventory has not been completed for the public lands located in this grazing allotment, a significant cave or karst feature(s) is known to exist within this allotment. Monitoring of the Cave/Karst feature(s) will be necessary to determine if protective measures are required in the future.

JOHN, NEED TO BEEF UP THIS SKIMPY WRITE-UP FOR RIPARIAN/WETLANDS.

11. Wetlands/Riparian: An ephemeral spring is located on federal land in Sec. 13. The spring source is fenced. The riparian vegetation consists primarily of salt cedar. Another small spring exists in section 24. Riparian vegetation there consists of inland saltgrass, rushes, sedges, and a few salt cedar.

12. Invasive, Nonnative Species: A population of African rue exists on this allotment. It is located along a 50 yard stretch of county road. Heavy equipment is probably the cause of the infestation. At this time the African rue is restricted to the area of disturbance along the road.

IV. Environmental Impacts

A. Impacts of the Proposed Action

1. Soils: Livestock remove the cover of standing vegetation and litter, and compact the soil by trampling. These effects can lead to reduced infiltration rates and increased runoff. Reduced vegetative cover and increased runoff can result in higher erosion rates and soil losses, making it more difficult to produce forage and to protect the soil from further erosion. These adverse effects can be greatly reduced by maintaining an adequate vegetative cover on the soil. Ongoing vegetation studies conducted on the allotment indicate that, at the level of grazing identified in the proposed action, the percent bare ground and rock found on the allotment fall within the parameters established by the RMP/EIS for this vegetative community. Proper utilization levels and grazing distribution patterns are expected to retain sufficient vegetative cover on the allotment as a whole and this will maintain the stability of the soils. Soil compaction and excessive vegetative use will occur at small, localized areas such as drinking locations, along trails and at bedding areas. Positive affects from the proposed action include the speeding up of the nutrient cycling process and chipping of the soil crust by hoof action.

2. Vegetation: Vegetation will continue to be grazed and trampled by domestic livestock as well as other herbivores. The area has been grazed by livestock since the early part of the 1900's, if not longer. Ecological condition and trend is expected to remain stable and/or improve over the long term at the permitted number of livestock. Vegetation monitoring indicates that there is an adequate amount of forage for the proposed number of livestock and for wildlife.

3. Wildlife: Domestic livestock will continue to utilize vegetative resources needed by a variety of wildlife species for life history functions within this allotment. The magnitude of livestock grazing impacts on wildlife is dependent upon the species of wildlife being considered, and it's habitat needs. In general, livestock stocking rate adjustments have been made in the past to minimize the direct competition for those vegetative resources needed by a variety of wildlife species. Cover habitat for wildlife will remain the same as the existing situation. Maintenance and operation of existing waterings will continue to provide dependable water sources for wildlife, as well as livestock.

4. Threatened and Endangered Species:

Pecos (Puzzle) Sunflower - Helianthus paradoxus

Grazing management may impede potential habitat within the draws that support springs from becoming more suitable habitat, and may impede the further development of existing riparian-wetland habitat on public lands. It is possible that, under conditions that would promote sunflower growth, the sites would not expand. Seasonal rest during the crucial flowering period of the sunflower would not be afforded under this alternative.

Effect Determination: May Affect.

Mountain Plover - Charadrius montanus

Grazing practices which maximize utilization of vegetation resources could increase mountain plover habitat, and is unlikely to adversely affect this species or its habitat on the allotment. Since no known wintering locales or breeding sites have been found and no known prairie dog towns are located within this allotment, grazing management would not likely jeopardize, destroy or adversely modify the habitat. As mountain plovers prefer short vegetation and actually seek out grazed pastures, the impacts from grazing are not anticipated to adversely affect the bird.

Effect Determination: Not Likely to Jeopardize the Continued Existence of the Species; Not Likely to Jeopardize, Destroy or Adversely Modify Habitat.

5. Livestock Management: Livestock would continue to be grazed with the same numbers in accordance with the livestock use agreement signed in 1995. Actual livestock numbers may be less than the active use depending on vegetative and economic conditions. No adverse impacts are anticipated.

6. Visual Resources: The continued grazing of livestock would not affect the form or color of the landscape, or the primary aspect of the vegetation within the allotment.

7. Water Quality - The drainages on the allotment are ephemeral, so direct impacts to surface water quality would be minor, short-term impacts during stormflow. Indirect impacts to water-quality related resources, such as fisheries, would not occur. The proposed action would not have a significant effect on ground water. Livestock would be dispersed over the allotment, and the soil would filter potential contaminants. Livestock would not impact the spring in section 13 since it is already fenced off. There would be a small impact to the spring in section 24. However, due to the brackish nature of the water and the fact that there are two drinking tubs within the pasture, this impact would not be significant.

8. Air Quality: Dust levels under the proposed action would be slightly higher than under the no grazing alternative due to allotment management activities. The levels would still be within the limits allowed in a Class II area for the Prevention of Significant Deterioration of air quality.

9. Recreation: Grazing should have little or no impact on the dispersed recreational opportunities within this allotment, since the recreational use of these public lands are relatively low. The evidence or presence of livestock can negatively affect visitors who desire solitude, unspoiled landscape views or hike without seeing signs of livestock. However, grazing can benefit some forms or recreation, such as hunting, by creating new water sources for game animals.

10. Cave/Karst: Grazing of the allotment may affect significant caves or karst resources if protective measures are not followed. If monitoring determines that significant caves or karst features are being affected by grazing, additional protective measures will be required. The protective measures could include, but are not limited to, the following actions: fencing sinks, cave entrances or arroyos from multiple-use impacts; removing check-dams, erosion control projects and stock ponds; closing roads; no chemical vegetation control. The area around significant caves or karst features should be treated sensitively, so no adverse impacts affect the cave or karst feature.

11. Wetlands/Riparian: Livestock would not impact the riparian vegetation at the spring in section 13 since it is already fenced off. There would be a small impact to the riparian vegetation around the spring in section 24. Due to the brackish nature of the water and the fact that there are two drinking tubs within the pasture, this impact would not be significant since the livestock do not intensively use this spring.

JOHN, LIVESTOCK TRAIL HEAVILY UP AND DOWN THE SUNFLOWER DRAW.

12. Invasive, Nonnative Species: Livestock grazing would not be a significant source of the spread of African rue within the allotment. At the level of livestock use within the proposed action, native vegetation would compete well with this plant. A Memorandum of Understanding exists between Chaves County, the state of New Mexico, and the BLM for weed control. An environmental assessment has been written and approved for noxious weed treatment within the Roswell Field Office.

B. Impacts of the No Livestock Grazing Alternative

1. Soils: Soil compaction would be reduced on the allotment around old trails and drinking troughs and there would be a small reduction in soil loss on the allotment.

2. Vegetation: It is expected that the number of plant species found within the allotment will remain the same, however, there would be small changes in the relative percentages of these species. Vegetation will continue to be utilized by wildlife. There would be an increase in the amount of standing vegetation.

3. Wildlife: Wildlife would have no competition with livestock for forage and cover. There would be no maintenance of livestock waters. As these waters became inoperable, water availability could become a critical limiting factor for many wildlife species.

4. Threatened and Endangered Species: Sunflower populations would probably expand to a limited extent under no grazing, but may be tempered by the abundance of vegetation production (alkali sacaton, phragmites, salt cedar) that would compete with the sunflower and potentially crowd out the germinating plants. The response of the known sunflower population on the allotment is dependent upon the timing of precipitation and the availability of soil moisture

during the critical germination period. Mountain plover habitat may decline since plovers tend to select grazed to overgrazed areas.

5. Livestock management: The forage from public land would be unavailable for use by the permittee. This would have a significant adverse economic impact to the livestock operation. The checkerboard land status on the allotment makes it economically unfeasible to fence out the federal land and use only the private land. It would become uneconomical for the permittee to continue agricultural production.

6. Visual Resources: There would be no change in the visual resources.

7. Water Quality: There could be a slight improvement in water quality due to the minor reductions in sediment loading during stormflow.

8. Air Quality: There would be a slightly less dust under this under this alternative versus the proposed alternative, but this would be negligible when considering all sources of dust.

9. Recreation: Those recreationists who desire solitude and no livestock would be benefitted from this alternative. Hunters may not benefit from this alternative if livestock waters are not maintained, which would affect hunting opportunities

10. Cave/Karst: There would be no effect to this resource from this alternative.

11. Wetland/Riparian: There would be no difference between this alternative and the proposed alternative since the riparian area is already fenced in section 13. This alternative would have a small benefit to the riparian area in section 24.

12. Invasive, Nonnative Species: Removal of livestock grazing would have no affect on the African Rue within this allotment since livestock are not the primary cause of it's spread.

D. Impacts from the Implementation of a Cooperative Management Plan:

1. Soils: The impacts to the soils under this alternative are similar to those anticipated under Alternative A (the Proposed Action).

2. Vegetation: It is anticipated that a planned grazing scheme will have beneficial impacts to the vegetative resources. The shortened period of grazing for each pasture will ensure that the vegetative resources will not be over grazed and the recovery period of 90 - 120 days will ensure regrowth and the replenishment of plant energy reserves prior to be grazed again. It is anticipated that plant diversity in the monotypic stands of alkali sacaton and tobosa grass will increase as the canopy cover of these grasses are opened up.

3. Wildlife: The impacts to wildlife under this alternative are similar to those anticipated under Alternative A (the Proposed Action).

4. Threatened and Endangered Species:

Pecos (Puzzle) Sunflower - Helianthus paradoxus

Grazing management would not impede potential habitat within the draws that support springs from becoming more suitable habitat, and would not impede the further development of existing riparian-wetland habitat on public lands. It is possible that, under conditions that would promote sunflower growth, the sites would expand. The development of CMPs for livestock grazing on Allotment 65307 would have beneficial effects by protecting riparian areas from activities associated with livestock grazing management. Seasonal rest during the crucial growth and flowering period of the sunflower is proposed for the allotment. The response of the known sunflower population on the allotment is dependent upon the timing of precipitation and the availability of soil moisture during the critical germination period.

Effect Determination: May Affect, Not Likely to Adversely Affect. The effects due to livestock grazing authorization on the allotment are either wholly beneficial, or have adverse aspects that are discountable or insignificant.

Mountain Plover - Charadrius montanus

Grazing practices which maintain or improve ground cover to the greatest extent possible could decrease mountain plover habitat. The preferred alternative would continue to emphasize proper watershed management, but is unlikely to adversely affect this species or its habitat on the allotment. Since no known wintering locales or breeding sites have been found and no known prairie dog towns are located within this allotment, proper grazing management is not likely to jeopardize, destroy or adversely modify the habitat. As mountain plovers prefer short vegetation and actually seek out grazed pastures, the impacts from grazing are not anticipated to adversely affect the bird.

Effect Determination: Not Likely to Jeopardize the Continued Existence of the Species; Not Likely to Jeopardize, Destroy or Adversely Modify Habitat.

5. Livestock: Livestock numbers will fluctuate to some degree throughout the year. Under the proposed plan calving season will be shifted from year-long to the spring. Livestock will be herded to some degree to promote the achievement of the objectives of the biological plan.

6. Visual Resources: The continued grazing of livestock would not affect the form or color of the landscape, or the primary aspect of the vegetation within the allotment.

7. Water Quality - The drainages on the allotment are ephemeral, so direct impacts to surface water quality would be minor, short-term impacts during stormflow. Indirect impacts to water-quality related resources, such as fisheries, would not occur. This alternative would not have a significant effect on ground water. Livestock would be dispersed over the allotment, and the soil would filter potential contaminants. Livestock would not impact the spring in section 13 since it

is already fenced off. There would be a small impact to the spring in section 24. However, due to the brackish nature of the water and the fact that there are two drinking tubs within the pasture, this impact would not be significant.

8. Air Quality: Dust levels under this alternative would be slightly higher than under the no grazing alternative due to allotment management activities. The levels would still be within the limits allowed in a Class II area for the Prevention of Significant Deterioration of air quality.

9. Recreation: Grazing should have little or no impact on the dispersed recreational opportunities within this allotment, since the recreational use of these public lands are relatively low. The evidence or presence of livestock can negatively affect visitors who desire solitude, unspoiled landscape views or hike without seeing signs of livestock. However, grazing can benefit some forms or recreation, such as hunting, by creating new water sources for game animals.

10. Cave/Karst: Grazing of the allotment may affect significant caves or karst resources if protective measures are not followed. If monitoring determines that significant caves or karst features are being affected by grazing, additional protective measures will be required. The protective measures could include, but are not limited to, the following actions: fencing sinks, cave entrances or arroyos from multiple-use impacts; removing check-dams, erosion control projects and stock ponds; closing roads; no chemical vegetation control. The area around significant caves or karst features should be treated sensitively, so no adverse impacts affect the cave or karst feature.

11. Wetlands/Riparian: Livestock would not impact the riparian vegetation at the spring in section 13 since it is already fenced off. There would be a small impact to the riparian vegetation around the spring in section 24. Due to the brackish nature of the water and the fact that there are two drinking tubs within the pasture, this impact would not be significant since the livestock do not intensively use this spring.

12. Invasive, Nonnative Species: Livestock grazing would not be a significant source of the spread of African Rue within the allotment. At the level of livestock use within the proposed action, native vegetation would compete well with this plant. A Memorandum of Understanding exists between Chaves County, the state of New Mexico, and the BLM for weed control. An environmental assessment has been written and approved for noxious weed treatment within the Roswell Field Office.

V. Cumulative Impacts

All of the allotments that have permits/leases with the BLM will have to go through scoping and analysis under NEPA. Allotment 65037 is near allotments that will be undergoing this process. If Alternative A (Proposed Action) or Alternative D (Implementation of a CMP) is selected, there would be no change in the cumulative impacts since it does not vary from the current situation.

If the no livestock grazing alternative is selected, there would be little change in the cumulative impact as long as the surrounding allotments continue to be stocked at their current level. If the leased numbers are reduced on the surrounding ranches as well, the economics of the surrounding communities and/or minority/low income populations would be negatively impacted.

The No Grazing alternative was considered, but not chosen in the Rangeland Reform Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Record of Decision (ROD) (p. 28). The elimination of grazing in the Roswell Field Office Area was also considered but eliminated by the Roswell RMP/ROD (pp. ROD-2).

On the allotment specific level, there will be no cumulatively significant impacts from the proposed action or from the no grazing alternative.

VI. Residual Impacts

The area has been grazed by livestock since the early part of the 1900's, if not longer. Vegetative monitoring studies have shown that grazing, at the current permitted numbers of animals, is sustainable. If the mitigation measures are enacted, then there would be no residual impacts to the proposed action.

VII. Mitigating Measures

Vegetation monitoring studies will continue to be conducted and the permitted numbers of livestock will be adjusted if necessary. If new information surfaces that livestock grazing is negatively impacting other resources, action will be taken at that time to mitigate those impacts.

VIII. Fundamentals of Rangeland Health

The fundamentals of rangeland health are identified in 43 CFR §§4180.1 and pertain to watershed function, ecological processes, water quality, and habitat for threatened and endangered (T&E) species and other special status species. Based on the available data and professional judgement, the evaluation by this environmental assessment indicates that the conditions identified in the fundamentals of rangeland health exist on the allotment.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT/RATIONALE

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT: I have reviewed this environmental assessment including the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant environmental impacts. I have determined the **proposed action** will not have significant impacts on the human environment and that preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required.

Rationale for Recommendations: The proposed action would not result in any undue or unnecessary environmental degradation. The **proposed action** will be in compliance with the Roswell Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision (October, 1997).

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T. R. Kreager, Date

Acting Assistant Field Office Manager - Resources

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